The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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He Calleth them all by Names.

The flocks of stars that so'emn shine
On heav'n's wide wold,
Are tended by a hand divine,
Sheltered within a fold.

A 'wildered crowd to us they seem,
With 'wildered aims;
To Him each burns with a differing beam,
"He calleth them all by names."

Their quiring voice falls on our ear
One mystic sound!
Each trembles with a cadence clear,
In harmony profound

To Him. Dear God! the flocks of men
Are known by Thee;
The crowds that come and go again,
Each soul Thine eye doth see.

Each soul uplifts a different need,
A different cry;
Each soul the hand of God doth feed
With manna from on high.

No meanest child of man but shows
A thought of God;
Either as snowdrop or as rose,
Or daisy in the sod.

Each of us watered and shone upon,
And fill'd with life;
Each dear to God, and never one
Lost in the age-long strife.

Amid the rush of hurrying feet,
'Tis this reclaims
From nothingness, this word so sweet—
"He calleth them all by names."

SHIRLEY KING.

Religious Realities.

A SERMON, BY

H. W. CROSSKEY, LL.D.

The longer I live the more impatient I find myself becoming of anything and everything that is artificial, pretentious, unnatural in my religion. "I allow no hot beds in the garden of Parnassus," said Charles Lamb; and I for one desire no hot beds in the realm of my religious faith, and shrink from *artificially forced* thoughts and feelings touching God and Christ, and man's eternal destiny. Any faith to be—for me personally—an honest and a healthful faith, must spring up within my own being, naturally, and not be transported into me like an exotic plant from a foreign country. The soil in which it must take root is that composed of the best common sense I can obtain, and the purest and sweetest human affections I can cherish. Its growth must be quickened by the warmth of the sun which shines in the latitude of the very land in which it is my lot to dwell.

To make clear what I mean, let me give an illustration from the history of English literature.

The poetry of the Elizabethan age has the freshness of the early Spring—when the dew of the morning sparkles in the tender light of the youthfully-vigorous sun, and the wild flowers fill the meadows, and the birds break their wintry silence with full-throated songs, and every breathing creature on earth or in the air rejoices to be alive. But such new delights as those which the young Spring gives, gradually ceased to

charm our men of letters, and after the death of Dryden came a long epoch of artificiality. Even a man of such exquisite taste as Addison laid down canons which promoted the change. He held that "a poet should take particular care to guard himself against idiomatic ways of speaking" since "obvious phrases" he thought "contract a kind of meanness in passing through the mouths of the vulgar;" that the language of a great poem "ought to deviate from the common forms and ordinary phrases of speech." "For this reason (Addison adds) the works of ancient authors, which are written in dead languages, have a great advantage over those which are written in languages now spoken."—(*Spectator*, No. 285.) So far, however, from a word or phrase being condemnable as "vulgar" because it is common—it is often in common use because it most fully expresses a real feeling; and such canons of criticism could not but tend to blind men to the poetry of daily life.

In this artificial epoch of our literature, which although marked by a few protests extended through the eighteenth century, plain clear speech was avoided;—a girl could only be spoken of as a nymph or a goddess; a love song could scarcely be written without introducing Cupid and his arrows; to go out on a moonlight night was to walk in fair Cynthia's light.

Ordinary men and women and ordinary experiences were regarded as too low and insignificant for high and noble literature; and few save people of high rank were deemed worthy of being glorified in its exalted pages.

But great men arose with a deeper reverence for the "plain humanities of nature."

Burns found in the "banks and braes o' bonny Doon," in the daisy, in the field mouse whose nest his plough-share had crushed, in the thistles of his native land, themes for immortal songs. Wordsworth thrust aside all distortions and exaggerations of speech, thought and feeling, made a Scotch pedlar the hero of an epic; was inspired by a poor leech gatherer on a lonely moor to speak in the world's ear for ever "of resolution and independence;" and found in the despairs and the loves, the sorrows and the joys of farmers, waggoners, shepherds, reapers and who not, as in the daffodil, the celandine, the thorn, the oak and the broom, themes to challenge the full strength of his genius. And when our last great poet was carried to his grave and Tennyson passed "far beyond our vision and our hail," to be "heard for ever" but to be "seen no more," all who paid loving tribute to his memory noted how wondrously his works uplift our minds, and purify while they charm our hearts, by making us both understand and feel the loveliness of the most familiar scenes among our English fields in every exquisite detail, and how he takes the heroes and heroines of his song not only from classical and mediæval legends, but from the ranks of our common soldiers and from the family histories of gardeners, clerks, and fishermen.

The return to nature and humanity is not yet so complete in our English religion as it has been in our English literature; and a few examples of the kind of artificialities, which, in my opinion, confuse and conceal the sublime realities of a rational piety I will briefly describe.

I. Without discussing the subtile and intricate articles of faith generally accepted in Christendom, in their controversial aspects, all *definitions* of the personality of the Eternal Being appear to me extremely artificial. In attempting to define the nature of the awful Power of Powers subsisting behind and within all the phenomena of nature and of life, we are compelled to confine what is infinite within the boundaries of human language and the consequent exaggeration of words in common use makes them unreal and almost meaningless through the mystery in which they become involved. In a letter I lately received from a friend (who has no opportunity of attending the services of a church in which any other than current creeds are taught) the following remarkable passage occurs, which is directly to the point at issue:—"It is so difficult to pray when the seeming unreality of all worship and the lonely sense of only being able to look at other people's religion and see how beautiful and true things are to them which are absolutely nothing to me *(because I can only believe in God when I am alone, quite alone)*—leaves all forms of worship like plays which I can only watch."

The interpretation of this experience is, I think, as follows:—When *alone* my friend is

with her own mind and heart and conscience; and through the activity and in the depths of her own mind and heart and conscience is brought close to the spirit of her Creator. In the innermost recesses of her own being the source of all being is revealed to her. But the words about God used in ordinary church services do not find her out because they do not correspond with any spiritual realities of which she has personal knowledge.

If this interpretation of my friend's letter be correct, my own experience corresponds with hers.

The religion which has laid its strong hand upon my own soul and to which I give a most imperfect and yet thoroughly believing adhesion, I find in nature and humanity as I know them alike in their inward and outward manifestations.

Striving to escape from all exaggerated and unnatural words, thoughts and feelings, I find myself face to face with certain majestic and awe-inspiring realities.

Ignorant and foolish as the wisest amongst us are, in the inmost depths of our being we find ourselves, as a fact, possessed of almost boundless capacities for reverencing and for loving, and a boundless aspiration after whatsoever things are most true, just, tender, pure and freest from the taint of evil. These capacities are not of our own creation; they are bestowed upon us; and I bow down before their Giver—the source of my own life as He is—as my Lord and my God.

Imperfect and sinful as we are, within us a great sense of shame arises whenever we are false to any principle of conduct our souls recognise as supremely good. We cannot help ourselves. That we personally feel ourselves convicted of "sin," that we suffer the agonies of remorse, is not our own doing. We should greatly prefer never to feel ashamed of ourselves; but after committing a wrongful deed in vain we cry "Peace, peace," even to our own hearts; —there can be, there will be, no peace without penitence. At the same time, when even we quietly put to ourselves the question "what *ought* we to feel or do?"—no man or woman among us is so mean as not to feel that a diviner life than any yet led has a commanding claim. What do these experiences—and they are real ones—mean? How is it that although we sin, we hate ourselves for sinning and acknowledge the authority of what is nobler?

We did not create ourselves—and it directly follows that our shame and our aspirations are the result of the decrees of the God of nature and humanity.

Let no one imagine, therefore, that to be religious he is obliged to perplex himself with words so vast as to be unintelligible, and with propositions so abstract as to be beyond his power to grasp.

Human thoughts, human duties, human affections, capable of being expressed in ordinary human language, are as a rock upon which the Temple of sublimest worship may be upbuilt. And in *that* Temple—that which is described in the old legend of the Day of Pentecost when (as the tale runs) cloven tongues "like as of fire" sat upon each of the Apostles, will come to pass—each man will hear the spirit of God speaking to him in the language of his own heart.

II. Especially is a return to nature and humanity required in our thoughts and feelings regarding Christ.

To many minds, there are many Christs.

There is the mystic Christ:—the Christ whose relationship to the substance and essence of the supreme God, the Fathers of the Church have so firmly believed that they could at least describe it in a creed, that they have threatened with eternal woe all who dissent from their opinions. Personally, I confess that *this* Christ does not lay his hands upon me. He is surrounded with too much mystery to be a familiar friend. He is removed too far from me to help me in the battle of life.

There is the official Christ:—the Christ who uses his position in the courts of Heaven to promote the interests of the human race. I cannot say that *this* Christ has any hold upon my heart. I know nothing as to the way in which the Almighty God may be prevailed upon to do this or do that; and am so profoundly conscious of His awful Majesty, that I believe the destiny of His children may safely and surely be left with Him.

There is the wonder-working Christ:—and *this* Christ has no power over me. It may be from a faulty disposition, but, as a fact, I am

more impressed by the order of nature than by any account of its miraculous disturbance, however certain it may be a miracle was wrought. The flowing of a stream between the crags and among the ferns and mountain ashes, tells me more of God than the turning of water into wine—the growth of a seed, than the record of the blasting of a fig tree. Moreover, even supposing Christ to have worked all the miracles attributed to him, I should not, on that account, love him;—he would only be proved to have possessed exceptional powers, nothing more, and while surprise and astonishment would be aroused, my heart would be untouched.

There is the Sectarian Christ:—the Christ who is supposed to have taught the dogmas professed by some one special sect and to require all his followers to belong to that sect, if they would know the mercy of God in its fulness. With *this* Christ I have no sympathy whatever. All men are God's children, and a Christ who narrowed His love could not have been His messenger.

There is the natural Christ:—and to *this* Christ my heart goes forth. It is true that biblical critics are impressing us with the difficulty of deciding exactly what the historical Christ said and did; but, as I read the gospels, a noble and self-sacrificing "Son of Man" arises, as it were, from its pages, and stands before the mind with sufficient clearness not only for the beauty of his holiness to be recognized, but for personal love and reverence.

Uncertainty as to matters of detail (important although in many critical respects they are) does not mar the supreme majesty of the central characteristics of the teachings and the life of this "Son of Man."

My heart goes forth to this *natural* Christ:—the Christ who believed that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, and who toiled to make the kingdoms of the world kingdoms of righteousness and love;—who sat at meat with publicans and sinners; who took children in His arms and blessed them; who chose the hated Samaritan as a witness against priest and Levite to the claims of humanity; who, in his very journey to the cross of agony, was moved to breathe the tenderest prayer that ever came from a martyr's lips; and who died rather than be false to his conscience, his world-redeeming work, and his God.

III. Less artificiality and more naturalness is also needed in our conceptions of what a religious life really is, and what religious experiences actually are.

The majority of tracts and sermons dwell upon what they term salvation, pardoning mercy, sanctification, justification;—and practically put questions such as the following to determine a man's religious condition:—

Do you wish to be saved?

My reply is, it entirely depends upon what is meant by being saved. If the meaning of the question is, do I desire to be saved from ill-tempers, unregulated passions, wrongful wishes and deeds?—a thousand times yes! I pray for such a salvation as *that*. If the meaning is do I desire to be saved from the consequences of an offence committed by Adam and Eve, I know so little about *that* matter that I frankly confess it does not trouble me in the slightest. To put the case very plainly, take the contrast between two types of character which I came across lately in my miscellaneous reading. Old Sam Pepys confesses himself as follows:—"1663, June 3rd. Going out of Whitehall I met Captain Grove who did give me a letter directed to myself from himself. I discerned money to be in it and took it knowing, as I found it, to be the proceed of the place I got him to be, the taking up of vessels for Tangier"—(that is it was a payment for an act of jobbery).—"But I did not open it until I got home to my office and there I broke it open, *not looking into it until all the money was out, that I might say I saw no money in the paper if ever I was questioned about it.*" That is Pepys wanted to take a bribe and practically tell a lie, and yet keep his conscience clear of offence! In G. J. Holyoake's "Sixty years of an agitator's life," I read that the uncle of the chartist agitator, Ernest C. Jones, offered to leave him £2000 a year if he would abandon his advocacy of the chartist cause; but if he would not, declared that his fortune should go to some one else. The sturdy old reformer, however, it is stated, declined the tempting bribe, and the fortune he proudly flung aside was actually given to his uncle's gardener. If desiring to be saved means the desiring *not* to have the spirit of the one

man and to have the spirit of the other, *then* with my whole mind, heart, and soul I do so desire; but, if it have no such meaning, I have little interest in what is called my "salvation."

Have you found Christ? is a question also pressed home as a test of the soul's condition before God, and to this the natural and true answer is neither an absolute affirmative nor an absolute negative.

Yes! (I can say) I have found Christ. I recognise in the life of that loving, pure, self-sacrificing son of God, *the* life to which even the humblest amongst us are called.

No! (I sadly add) I have not yet found Christ. I have not attained to the perfectness of his life—he stands far, far, before me—like a pillar of fire leading onward in the dark night of my unfaithfulness.

This religion of nature and humanity will be found, I believe, lacking in nothing which can render our mortal lives lovely and noble. It binds us by intelligible ties to the spirit of the God who made us. It uplifts us from the abyss of puzzling and perplexing thoughts touching infinite mysteries into the sphere of practical and practicable duties.

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A tale is told of a sculptor who uncovered in his studio for a visitor's examination, the apparently completely finished bust of a woman. "The first thing that struck me (wrote the visitor) as I looked at the face was the awful expression of dull despair, the hopeless misery that pinched her emaciated and care-worn features;" and he asked "can a girl with a face like that ever change it?" "You shall see, you shall see" cried the sculptor almost fiercely; and catching up his tool, with a few touches to the eyes and lips, he put cheerful hope and triumphant joy into the woe-worn face. There are times and seasons for most of us in which when we look upon *life itself* what is wretched and wrongful seems so to predominate that its sad aspect fills us with trembling fears.

Touch *life*, this life we share, with the faith that everything natural and human has its own divineness and is of God, and lo! a bright smile will bid us be of good and happy cheer.

Our deeds travel with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are.
—*George Eliot.*

A Round Table Conference.

AN EXTENDED LECTIONARY.*

III.

In my own ministry I have now, for about twenty years, read lessons from other devotional literature as well as from the Bible. In the preface of one of my books, *Compilations on Piety and Morality*, I gave a brief statement of my practice and some of the reasons which led me to adopt it; and as that statement is germane to the present discussion I cannot do better than copy it here.

I there say: "This work has grown out of the compiler's own felt necessity. He is a minister of religion, and many years ago concluded that God's inspiration is not confined to the Bible. As consistency demanded that he should manifest this conviction in his pulpit ministrations, he began then, and has since continued, to read lessons at his services from other devout and spiritually-minded authors, besides the writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments. In this way extracts from the Bibles of the great non-Christian religions—the *Vedas* of Hindooism, the *Koran* of Mahommedanism, the *Shû-king* of Confucianism, the *Tao Teh King* of Taoism, the *Tripitaka* of Buddhism, and the *Zend Avesta* of Parseeism—have been read. A similar use has been made of the writings of the most devout authors of mediæval and modern times. From some of these, at times, a long complete extract has been read, but at other times a lesson made up of many short extracts has been given. But, notwithstanding the conviction and consequent procedure thus described, the compiler has, all through, felt an increasing conviction that in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures the world has the best and highest of all devotional literature. It seems to him that as the ancient Greeks were pre-eminent in Art, the ancient Romans in Jurisprudence, and the modern British are unsurpassed in Manufactures and Commerce, so the ancient Jews (including the first Christians) have excelled all other peoples in the expression of the language of Religion. But he denies that this fact is a justification of the prevailing exclusive use of Hebrew devotional literature in the pulpit, especially in any

*The Editors are prepared to open the columns of *The Seed Sower* to Correspondence on this deeply interesting subject.

place of worship where both minister and people believe and teach that inspiration is not confined to its authors. The spiritual health and life of men call for pabulum of different degrees of nourishment, as do their bodily health and life. For which of us thinks it wise to confine himself only to the most nourishing foods he knows—lentils, and the like? And no more is it desirable that we should confine ourselves exclusively to the Bible for our public religious lessons. Variety is the charm of life spiritual, as well as of life ordinary. As we show ingratitude to God when we churlishly refuse to make use of foods he puts at our disposal, so we must do so when we refuse, in our religious services, to avail ourselves of other than a very small portion of His inspiration. We also thereby lose one of the best of all means of demonstrating that to all men, in all times, God has made known his light and truth, and that with Him there is no respect of persons."

It is eleven years since I wrote the foregoing sentences, and they still express my own sentiments on the subject of this "Round Table Conference." I notice now, however, that in writing that preface I made a singular omission of the chief reason which led me to give up reading lessons exclusively from the Bible, or at least I only glance at it when I speak of what consistency called for in me. Reared as I was in orthodoxy, I always had a feeling that by reading a thing in the pulpit a minister said, "I believe this to be true." Now there are very few chapters in the Bible, every verse of which I believe. Miracle stories which call forth protest from my reason; commended injustices which outrage my conscience; tribal partialities and prejudices which I cannot allow to dishonour God, are mixed up in the Bible with the most sublime sentiments and with the most absolute of truths. I could, therefore, no longer conscientiously read from the Bible in the way that most ministers do. I felt that this would be dishonest in me and misleading to all to whom I might not have explained my position. And I remember being much influenced at the time by reading of an incident which had just then occurred in Liverpool. The late Rev. Charles Beard, in one of his Sunday Evening Popular Lectures, in the Concert Hall, had told the audience, "I believe Jesus to have been born of his mother (Mary) and his father (Joseph), as has any working man here to-night been born of his father and mother." A number of working men who heard him say this, went the following Sunday night to Renshaw Street Chapel, and there, to their surprise, heard Mr. Beard read the first chapter of *Luke*, which asserts that Jesus was born of a virgin without a human father, and this without a word of explanation that he did not believe the story! I was not surprised to read that these working men came out of the chapel disposed never to enter a place of worship again. However, it was chiefly out of a religious desire to stand up true before men, and the difficulty I experienced in doing this and going on reading whole chapters from the Bible, that I was led to extend my pulpit Lectionary.

Turning now to the two papers which appeared in last month's *Seed Sower*, I, of course, mainly agree with Mr. Street, and mainly differ from Mr. Priestly Evans. The latter would appear to give up the whole case from the standpoint of reason, and to plead merely on the ground of custom, prejudice, and sentiment. Surely a cause must be a lost one when this is all that can be done to sustain it. I differ from Mr. Evans when he says there is no principle at stake in this matter. To me the fact that God has inspired others, besides the Biblical writers, is a principle, and I should be false to this principle if I did not assert it in my pulpit readings. Again, this is more a point for the decision of the minister than for that of the congregation, because the minister is responsible for the pulpit readings and the congregation is not. And while conscience is involved in the selector and reader, it is not in the mere listeners. If minister and congregation were exactly on the same footing, I could more readily subscribe to Mr. Evans' view that this change should only come by the demand of the congregation. Again, if we are always to be ruled by the sentimental feelings and prejudices of members of our congregations, will it ever be possible to make any advances or improvements at all?

PETER DEAN.

IV.

The plea for an extended Lectionary may justly be received with suspicion in a time when

poor writing is turned out by the mile. We do not want more show and less worth than we have at present. As wide reading does not necessitate wide culture, so an extended Lectionary need not increase the devotion of a service. We do not look to the globe-trotter for additions to science. A minister who reads the Vedas as well as the Psalms may know less of God than one who is quite innocent of Max Müller. Ultimately, it is God that is of consequence. "You may do what you like," said Joubert, "mankind will believe no one but God. If a minister knows God in his heart, he will need no other book than the Bible,—will find no other so full of divinity or so adapted to his purpose of bringing the Spirit of God into the souls of worshippers." An extended Lectionary involves less Bible. People need more Bible and more of the spirit which made it. But, perhaps, those who plead for an extended lectionary have exhausted the Bible. As long as the best tracts of land hold out, and give the farmer all the corn he needs, he does not go to poorer ground. Goethe said that "the Holy Scriptures brought no standard with them by which they could be measured; in their independence, wonderful originality, and many-sidedness, indeed, in the immeasureableness of their contents they were unique." Let anyone competent to judge look at Conway's "Sacred Anthology," and say what kind of a book it would be were the Hebrew and Christian extracts cut out. Without hesitation, I say that when a man has exhausted the Bible he can afford to dispense with the thin wisdom and diluted piety of these Vedas, Jatakas, Puranas, and the rest of them.

Doubtless, the supporters of an extended Lectionary would agree to the supreme claims of the Bible. Then why go to inferior scriptures? Is it for novelty? Or is it that the monotonous voice of eternal wisdom may be relieved by the stammerings of less assured sapience? Or is it to promote literary culture?

It will be a misfortune to any church if it so misapprehends the nature of worship as to imagine that acquaintance with the writings of living saints or dead poets may be secured while the soul is struggling into the presence of God against the sense of doubt and sin. It is the pure in heart who see God; not the men who are trying to make a bargain of private culture out of the sacred hours of meditation and prayer, but those who, without thinking of self, want God because He is all in all. We ought to have no patience with those who come to church expecting to hear a sermon of precise rhetoric and complete philosophy, and to promote their literary education by means of extracts from Rabbi M. Aurelius, Rabbi Tennyson, or Rabbi Ruskin, while they have no intention of doing anything but what Rabbi Self pleases.

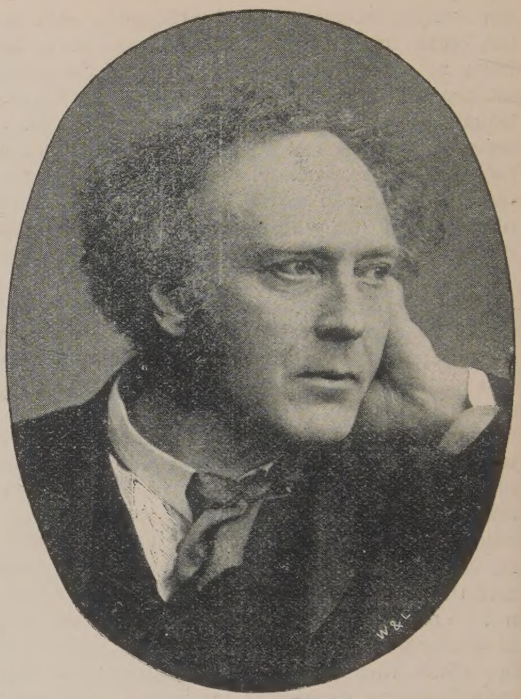
What are these complex moods and tenses of modern times, which demand such variety of medicament; these last developments of feeling and aspiration, which were unknown in eastern lands long centuries ago? Surely God is healing enough for every condition of the mind. Some moods do not so much need treatment as indifference; better not to notice them than to meet them. As for the time's tenses, it is difficult to attach any meaning to them. Perhaps they are of the nature of paulo-post-future,—still to come some day, or a little afterwards. The "tension" of the age is more comprehensible, but will likelier be cured by an alteration of its ideal than an extension of its Lectionary. When men live more for goodness than for show it will be better for them. There are several chapters in the Bible, *e.g.*, Ps. 4, which touch this complaint.

As for feelings and aspirations, people still feel after God, if haply they may find Him, and the best book to help them is the Bible. Human souls still aspire, as they have ever done, towards duty and immortality, and communion with the Holy and the Invisible; and the best comfort and counsel for them is in the Scriptures of that nation whose history has been a special vehicle for the conveyance of the Divine Spirit to humanity. The needs of people to-day are, in matters of religion, the same as when Job said, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" There is more of God in the Bible than in any other collection of books on earth. Shakespeare is most deeply indebted to the Bible. Spinoza, at his best, is intoxicated with the spirit of the Bible. Burns is a Bible-lover. Sir Walter Scott is an ardent reader of the Bible. Goethe confesses his obligations to the Bible for the greater part of his moral culture.

There is nothing in Ruskin which is not the development of a few germs in the Pentateuch and the Gospel. Name any writer who would be likely to be included in the extended Lectionary, be it Whittier or Lowell, Emerson or Theodore Parker, Carlyle, or Tennyson, and it will be found that the better they are, and the more adapted to assist devotion, the more close is their relation to the Bible. They are derivative saints and indebted sages. We do not blame them, but decline to place them in the same rank as their masters. As expositors and illustrators of the Bible, their use in worship is admirable; but as taking an equivalent position in an extended Lectionary they are out of their right place.

One good thing which ministers might do in their services is to show that they attach at least as much importance to what they read in the Bible as to what they write on their sermon manuscripts. There is sometimes an enormous contrast between the listlessness of the reader and the intensity of the preacher. Some men never seem to wake up till they come to the sermon. Ministers would lend a little force to their contention that the Bible is inspired if they read it a little more inspiringly in public. How can we believe that a man is indebted to the Bible for the greater part of his spiritual possessions if he reads it with as much intelligence and feeling as if it were an auctioneer's list or a column of advertisements? Not a little of the inattention which is shown to the reading of the Bible in churches is owing to the slovenly way in which it is so frequently done. Often the reading appears to be selected while the previous hymn is being sung. No preparation has been given to it. If the congregation is either interested or instructed by such reading it is no credit to the minister. A man must have some conceit of himself to think he can read, *e.g.*, Isaiah xi. without any preparation. In the book of Nehemiah it is said that Ezra selected men to read the book of the law of God who could read distinctly, and give the sense, and cause the people to understand the meaning. It might be found that the Bible was adequate to all the soul's needs and aspirations if modern ministers were able to comply with Ezra's conditions to a more general extent.

H. H. SNELL.



An Interview with the Rev. Stopford Brooke, M.A.

A recent visit on the part of Mr. Stopford Brooke to Birmingham gave our interviewer an opportunity of drawing from this great preacher and fine scholar a frank exposition of his views on Socialism. Mr Brooke has the noble arched Tennysonian head, the head of the poet and the artist, and like most men of that temperament his sympathies run on great, broad, humanitarian lines. With all the tastes of the man of culture, with a poet's sensibility and an artist s delight in beautiful things, he yet gives the warmth of his heart and his best thought to the masses of the people rather than to any privileged section of the community. It is the common life of humanity which lays hold of his imagination. The squalor, the dire poverty, the dreary outlook for old age and sickness, the dull monotony of the life of the poor; the intense and undisguised selfishness of our popular theories of trade and economics; the worship of wealth with its degradation both for the worker and

the idler—these and many other influences have combined to make Mr. Brooke a Socialist. With the Bishop of Durham, John Ruskin, William Morris, Walter Crane, and many other noble and artistic souls, not prejudiced, blinded and enslaved by current doctrines of money-making, Mr. Brooke believes that the salvation of society, with the cure of its present ills, will only come about by the substitution of co-operation for competition, and of the Sermon on the Mount for the coarse brutalities of what passes for economic science.

But to many it is strange and unaccountable that a scholar, a poet, a fine critic, a late Queen's chaplain, and the present minister of one of the most thoughtful and cultured congregations in the world should yet ally himself with "Fabians" and their like—the terror of all bourgeois respectabilities. Many who are greatly indebted to him as a preacher and a man of letters are puzzled and even distressed by his Socialism. This was the point our interviewer brought before Mr. Brooke with the question—"Can you enlighten the perplexity of your friends?" He replied:—

"I do not see how a Christian, or at any rate a Christian minister, can be anything but a Socialist Five and twenty years ago when I was at St. James' Chapel I advocated what is now known as Municipal Socialism It is true I could not avow myself a Socialist so long as Socialism was identified with violent and revolutionary methods, but when the 'Fabian' Society was formed with the intention of promoting social and economic changes by constitutional means, by persuading the majority, and by action in Parliament, then I felt I had a platform on which I could stand before the public. One thing that has brought me to the present position is the tone and ideal of life which results from the competitive system—the glorification of wealth as the all in all of life. I cannot understand how people can devote all their thoughts, energies, hopes and days to getting a lot of money, merely that they may keep it and leave it to their children after them, as if it were everything. All else is sacrificed; the joy of life, gaiety, great objects, human justice, the law of love, the sense of beauty, the best uses of life. Everything is sacrificed to this one object, and they themselves become mere machines for turning out work. I am not angry with them. They live in an atmosphere impossible for them to get out of in this world, and there is little use in trying to convert them. Life for them is still in a way moral and active: but it has lost its inspiration and is done mechanically. Imagination is killed out—the worldliness of money-making has enslaved them. Many of them are estimable people in their way, but although they call themselves Christians they have not yet conceived the idea that love to their neighbour means exactly the same kind of regard for the whole of society that it means for their own family."

"Is not that a counsel of perfection?"

"Not at all, as such counsels are ordinarily understood. The Christian law of love is as wide as humanity—for in it there is neither degree, nor nation, nor time, nor place, nor language, but mankind is all in all. We are to gaze on the vast landscape of humanity with the same inspiring delight and interest we feel in our own children and brethren. As Christians we are citizens, not of England only, but of the vast polity of mankind; we are brothers, not of a household only, but of a vast society. If we could take it in it is a thought that would make us great in heart, and would forbid us to act towards any in ways we would not act towards our own family."

"To what extent, Mr. Brooke, is the Socialism of our day a religious movement?"

"To a much greater extent than at any former time Men like Ben Tillett and Tom Mann have first approached it from the religious side The greater number of young Socialists in London are quite willing to say that the good Jesus is a good Socialist. On the other hand all that Bumbledom calls Christianity, all the business of priests, and churches, and sects, and dogmas is repellent to them. The great masses of the working people are alienated from churches largely by the fact that churches are associated with bourgeois respectabilities, and these respectabilities are identified in their mind with an economic system which injures human brotherhood, which exalts unscrupulous competition, which grinds down the labourer to a bare pittance, and absorbs profits drawn from starving seamstresses, sweated match-makers,

and other monstrous growths of the supply and demand fetish.

"Happily a great number of modern Socialists are keenly alive to the spiritual side of things—the imaginative side—and what they are aiming at is not mainly or chiefly material prosperity, but the refining of the ideals of life. A little story will illustrate my point. My daughter was once visiting in her district when she was asked to call on an old shoemaker who had come nearly to his end. He was one of the old class of shoemakers common before the introduction of machinery, intelligent and hard-working. He had poisoned his hand and was now in bed. In course of time my daughter obtained his permission to read to him, and she thought she would try him with Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" At first he did not understand, but gradually he woke up to the story and became not only interested but impassioned by it, and finally he said, "If I could have known it, that sort of poetry would have made a happy man of me, but I've been hard at work 50 years and never had any leisure, and now I'm dying." "Think of that," said Mr. Brooke, catching fire, "An industrial system which does not allow any leisure for the ideals of life. Now I believe it is so possible to arrange Society and industry as to enable a man to do all the work that is necessary for decent, adequate and comfortable living in four or five hours a day, leaving him ample leisure for the development of his mental, moral, and æsthetic life."

"Has English Socialism any leaders capable of giving it shape and direction, or is it a soldier's battle?"

"So far it is a soldier's battle. There are leaders, but no one of commanding eminence and ability. It remains to be seen what John Burns may do, and I am very glad that he is having the practical training for public life on the County Council and in Parliament. So many fail for want of experience of the management of public business. What Socialism needs is knowledge of affairs and the power of administration. Now men only get a knowledge of affairs by doing affairs, so I am with the Sidney Webbs who believe that Socialism must inform itself by experience on Town Councils, School Boards, Boards of Guardians, and in the House of Commons. Socialism was for a long time a sentimental thing and of that aspect of it Shelley was the finest representative. It is now seen that if it is to succeed it must find for itself a scientific basis. The working men of this country are as yet uneducated in the multitudinous details that go to carrying on a great concern — national and municipal. They have been educated in combination by their Trades Unions. They understand what class self-sacrifice means. But they are lacking in ordinary economic education. They spend their time and energies in vague attacks on property, but they have yet to find out and express clearly what it is they specially want. When they once see and make up their minds as to their definite wants they will be irresistible. But their ideas need enlarging by actual acquaintance with the difficulties and responsibilities of public life."

"Is it the part of the churches to pronounce on social questions, or is it rather the preachers' part to enunciate the general laws of right and leave politicians to make the application?"

"I do not think that the pulpit as such should ally itself with any one merely political party. On the other hand all these social questions touching as they do the health and welfare of the whole community, are surely the preacher's very business. Hitherto preaching and the work of the church has been set on individual regeneration. The mission of the preacher to-day is to take Christianity out of its individualism and make it a universal religion. It is ours to show that it applies to communities and nations, and to human Society as a whole. In past times too many have preached that while Christ's new commandment of love applied in the family and in a few individual relations it did not apply to national and international relations, nor to methods of business, nor to the relations of employers and employed, nor to the laws of social, economic and industrial life. Bishops and others have told us, for instance, that the Sermon on the Mount is not possible, as applied to national affairs or industrial life. On the contrary I believe that the great idea of Christian self-sacrifice is the basis of all good government, of all economic relations and of all national and international law and order. They say the Sermon on the Mount is all very

vell, but in business life we must listen to nature. Yes, so say I—listen to nature—and he natural thing is to love one another. It is unnatural to hate and snatch from one another n greed, and cut each other's throats by competition. The entirely natural thing, beautiful, possible, is to love. Socialism is a return upon he idea that love is the true and only true law of human life. This is one of the things we have gained from the Positivists—that love is o be extended beyond the soul and God and family relations to the State and to the Community. It is true many Socialists have yet to earn that economic science and the Christian aw of love are needful to each other—that Socialism won't succeed unless the two run ogether—hand in hand, like man and woman."

"Meanwhile," said Mr. Brooke, winding up the nterview. "The world needs a lot of patience —and we must go doggedly on pounding away at he old selfish conception of things which has nade life intolerable for so many. See the frightful dulness, ugliness and monotony of the lives of multitudes! The world wantsmore gaiety, needs o turn round at times and laugh itself: and this t can never do while consumed by all-devouring competition, greed, and anxious care."

I cannot think, I will not think, about the Christian Church as if it were a selection out of humauity. In its idea it is humanity. The hard, iron-faced man whom I meet in the street, he degraded, sad-faced man who goes to prison, he weak, silly-faced man who haunts society, he discouraged man, who drags the chain of drudgery—they are all members of the Church, members of Christ, children of God, heirs of he kingdom of heaven. Their birth made them o. It is impossible to estimate their lives right, unless we give this truth concerning them he first importance. Men talk as if the ministers of the Church were consecrated for the people. The old sacerdotal idea of substitution has not died away. Sometimes it is distinctly proclaimed and taught. What is the release from such an idea? Not to teach that ministers are not consecrated, but to teach that all the people are. Only when all men become full of the sacredness of their own life will the assumption of supreme clerical sacredness find itself overwhelmed with he great rising tide.—*Phillips Brooks.*

News from the Field.

BIRMINGHAM.—The Guild of Kindness, connected with the Old Meeting Church, had its Easter Tea Meeting and Gymnastic Display on April 4th. About 100 sat down to tea, and subsequently a very clever display was given by gymnasts of both sexes. The Winter Classes of the Guild—Ambulance, Cookery, Musical Drill, Literature, &c.,—have had a most successful season. The Guild now numbers 200 members, and a Junior branch in addition of 100 members.

BIRMINGHAM. — HURST STREET MISSION. — The fifty-third annual meeting of the Hurst Street Mission was held at the Mission Chapel, Hurst Street, on Tuesday, April 18th, Mr. F. S. Bolton in the chair. There was a large attendance, amongst those present being the Revds. Dr. Crosskey, J. Crossley, J. C. Street, and J. W. Clarke; Messrs. J. Mott, J. W. Field, G. H. Smith, H. New, jun., W. Sorrell, J. F. Luckett, W. Tranter, and J. B. Wright. A letter of apology, on acccunt of illness, was received from Mr. H. Brown, secretary of the mission. A report of the Sunday School Committee showed that during the year 1892 260 children were on the books. The report gave a long statement of work done by the mission in the shape of chapel services, Sunday-school teaching for children and adults, the holding of temperance meetings and weekly classes, "entertaining the people," social gatherings, mothers' meetings, &c. In connection with the mission there are also a gymnasium, a military band, a drum-and-fife band, a library, advice and employment offices, a provident institution, and an agency for the relief of the poor with garments, dispensary notes, and money. A ladies' committee also does a great deal of phi anthropic work.—Mr. Bolton moved the adoption of the report, and a resolution congratulating the missionary, Mr. Clarke, upon the successful completion of another year's work. He expressed regret that a debt was due on the insitution of £700, which he explained meant the payment of £30 a year in interest. He said that he would give £50 towards the debt providing the remaining portion was raised by this time next year.—(Applause.) Mr. Smith, in seconding the motion, said that he felt sure everyone would agree with him when he said that Mr. Clarke was working too hard—(applause)—and that he ought to take more care of himself. He said that nothing seemed too much for Mr. Clarke to undertake if he thought it would do any good in the world.—Mr. Clarke briefly replied.—Several complimentary resolutions were passed, and officers were appointed, Mr. Hugh Nettlefold being elected president, Mr. F. S. Bolton treasurer, and Mr. Herbert Brown secretary.—We understand that a new departure is contemplated in connection with the work of this mission. We are not at present in a position to enter into details; but we believe that a resolute effort is to be made to take care that no child in the district immediately surrounding the Mission shall be exposed to the biting winds and frost and snow of autumn and winter, with insufficiency of clothing for bodily health and comfort. We believe, too, it is intended to attempt this, if at all, under conditions which will avoid the risk of pauperising the people, and will make abuse of the

help given almost impossible. How much of real and all too deeply needed good might be done in this direction by boldness, wisdom and sympathy combined none but those who are personally familiar with the lot and the lives of the poor can fully realise. Possibly the Mission may accomplish a greater work in this way than has yet been thought possible. We shall see.

KIDDERMINSTER.—The Re-dedication service of the Guild of the Good Shepherd was held on Thursday, March 30th. The Rev. E. P. Hall, of Trowbridge, (Provost), preached a very able sermon, 110 members of this branch of the Guild being present. After the service the Warden conducted the Communion Service. On Good Friday morning, Mr. Hall preached again to a very appreciative audience.

KINGSWOOD (HOLLYWOOD).—An interesting event here on the 19th of March, was the presentation, by a number of friends, of a tea service and cruet to Mr. and Mrs. Smedley, on the occasion of their marriage. Mr. Smedley has been organist and Sunday School Bank Secretary for many years, and Mrs. Smedley has been a faithful teacher and a member of the choir from girlhood. During the month our minister gave us four evening lectures, on Christian Doctrine, the subjects being—"The Origin of all Things," "The Godhead, Unity or Trinity," "The only Wise and True God," and, "Who was Jesus of Nazareth?" On Sunday mornings there were some pleasant talks about the parables. On Easter Sunday, a Service of Sacred Song, "Scenes from the life of Jesus," compiled by the Rev. J. H. Matthews, was given morning and evening, and on the following day a pleasant tea party was held, after which a sale of work was carried on.

LYE.—At this small church the people are very much alive. During the winter Recreation Classes have been carried on, though not quite on the usual lines. Perhaps it would be better to call these meetings, classes for the development of the social element in congregational life. We understand that the bulk of the attendance came from the Sunday School teachers and senior scholars. There was a happy combination of amusement and instruction. Mr. Charles Cochrane kindly provided newspapers, books, and games, and several lectures have been delivered, the last of these being entitled "Illustrious Dunces."—In the Sunday School there is occasionally a departure from the ordinary routine. Instead of the usual teaching, the school plunges into a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. Teachers and scholars take part and enjoy themselves immensely.

STOURBRIDGE.—On Sunday, April 9th, Mr. Alderman White, of Birmingham, delivered an address on Sunday Morning Adult Classes to an audience in which the various religious sects in the town were represented. The meeting was held in the Corn Exchange after evening service. Mr. White's address was most interesting, and the instances given of the good which had been done by the Severn Street (Birmingham) Class were very striking. In one case—Mr. White said—a betting man joined the class for the sole purpose of learning to read and write, in order that he might carry on his betting business with greater advantage. The result was that he gave up betting, went back to honest work, and presented his betting book to the Superintendent of the school to be put in the Museum.—After Mr. White's address, Mr. A. W. Worthington moved that a school such as had been described be formed at Stourbridge, with Mr. H. Newnam as President, and a Committee representing the various denominations. This was carried.—In the course of his remarks, Mr. Worthington suggested that a religious service might be held on Sunday evenings in the Corn Exchange, after the usual evening service, in which the members of all religious denominations could join. The suggestion was well received, but it is questionable if it would work well, if such services were held every week. Either the usual services would be likely to be neglected, or the interest in the extra service would wane after a time. If a service such as Mr. Worthington suggested could be held once a month, it might do a great deal of good; at any rate, the experiment might be tried.—In moving a vote of thanks to the Chairman, the Rev. A. W. Timmins said that he had been delighted and inspired by Mr. White's address. He did not know to what denomination Mr. White belonged, but he thought he was a member of the only sect which he (the speaker) cared much about, viz., the Communion of Saints.—The Adult Class met for the first time on Sunday morning, April 16th.

WHITCHURCH.—A pleasing sign of the times was seen on the occasion of the delivery of the Presidential Address of the local Literary Club by the Rev. George Eyre Evans. The large room of the Working Men's Hall was filled by a representative gathering to hear the lecture on "Whitchurch of long ago." The Rector of the parish, amongst others, contributed to the loan of exhibits, and a resolution moved by Mr. T. G. Johnson, a Churchman, seconded by Mr. William Read, a Wesleyan, was adopted, requesting the Literary Club to print and sell the lecture for the benefit of the parishioners.

WOLVERHAMPTON.—The exhibition and Sale of Work held at the end of March for the Piano and Social Room fund realised £18, and about £10 worth of goods were left unsold.—On Sunday, April 16th, a Special Musical Service was held in the Chapel, the Choir being helped by several friends. The Cantata "Jerusalem" was effectively rendered, and satisfactory collections were taken on behalf of the General Hospital.

God is no God, if not good. Say it with all reverence, but say it firmly. God were no God, were he capable of disregarding the welfare of a sparrow, or trampling on the rights of a single worm.—*M. J. Savage.*

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.
—*M. Arnold.*

Notes of Sunday School Lessons.

FROM WHITTIER.

(Shilling Volume of *The Canterbury Poets*).

SUNDAY, MAY 7TH.

HE BROTHER OF MERCY (PAGE 240).

(Read: Romans ix. 1-5; xiii. 8-10; Hebrews i. 14.)

"Never fear!
For heaven is love, as God himself is love;
Thy work below shall be thy work above."

A Brother of Mercy (Piero Luca) is lying on s mat, waiting for death. With him is a onk. Piero speaks of his life of love and ty among the poor and plague-stricken for rty years. He had loved his work, never ounting it an off-set to his sins. It had come be so much a part of himself that he did not ow whether he could be happy without it. he Monk, thinking to soothe him, speaks of heaven in which not even sorrow for the lost all mar the perfect bliss. Such a heaven as no attraction for Piero—he has no desire r white robes, and a golden crown. He esn't want to sit among the lazy saints, night d day, doing nothing. He asks whether eath will so change him that he will turn a af ear to the sore complaints of souls that ffer. Hell would be better than such a heaven, the heart might still be human, and natural ty be allowed to find expression. Such a ought is rank heresy to the Monk, and he claims—"Madman! Thou art lost!" Left one, the dying man hears a voice which sures him that his work below will be his ork above.

Emerson says that "the cure for false eology is mother wit." It was Piero's mother t, that is, his common-sense and common-manity, that made him desire a better heaven an that of the creed of his Church. He dn't want "a walled-in heaven of everlasting alms." He wanted a heaven in which love d pity for his fellow men would find exercise. See George Macdonald's "Robert Falconer." Robert's "plan for maist han' booming' *lmost emptying*) hell," (page 81). George liot's "Fedalma" says—

"Father, I choose! I will not take a heaven.
Haunted by shrieks of far-off misery."

SUNDAY, MAY 14TH.

NAUGHAUT, THE DEACON (PAGE 63).

(Read: Deut. xvi. 20; Psalm vii. 3-10; Proverbs xix. 1; Luke vi. 31; 2 Cor. viii. 21.)

"Naughaut be a man!
Starve if need be; but while you live, look out
From honest eyes on all men, unashamed."

An Indian legend. Some of the Indians were converted to Christianity by Puritan settlers in New England—others by French Roman Catholics who settled in Canada. Churches of "praying Indians" were formed under native pastors and deacons. Naughaut, a poor deacon, with a sick wife and child, dreams that an angel drops a piece of gold in his hand in the Name of God. He goes out early to see whether anything fit for food has been caught in his traps. Finding nothing, he asks God to send the angel of his dream. On looking down he sees a purse of gold at his feet. Shall he take it and say nothing about it? "Who would be wiser, in the blind, dumb woods?" He thinks of his sick wife and starved child. Is there a hell, and will he go there if he takes the gold? He sees the Tempter in a snake lying upon the hot sand. He hears a voice as of "the voice of God among the trees of Eden," and in that moment the great temptation is overcome. He goes bravely back, and cheerily asks at the door of the inn—"Who hath lost aught to-day?" The money is claimed, and the owner, a skipper, gives him a piece of gold. When the neighbours speak of the skipper, he says to himself, —"I saw the angel where they see a man."

Temptation to wrong-doing comes in various forms, according to circumstance and opportunity. The purest satisfaction comes of right-doing. "It is joy to the just to do judgment." The reward is in the act. The deacon might have kept the gold without fear of discovery, but he could not keep it and maintain his self-respect. We lose our souls just to the extent we lose the sense of right, honour, and justice. The only hell to be feared is the hell we make for ourselves. A boy who was urged to do a wrong thing on the ground that no one would see him, replied that he should see himself and be ashamed.

SUNDAY, MAY 21ST.

MARY GARVIN (PAGE 169).

(Read: Micah vi. 6-8; Hosea vi. 6; Luke ix. 49-50.)

In this ballad is related a story of the old Colonial days, when English settlers were often at war with the Indians, or with the Indians and French Catholics combined. One evening Farmer Garvin and his wife were sitting by their log fire, both thinking of what happened twenty years before.

"The good wife dropped her needles, it is twenty years to-day,
Since the Indians fell on Saco, and stole our child away."

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and when it was opened the firelight shone on two strangers, man and maiden. They were kindly received by Elkanah Garvin and his wife. Dame Garvin saw in the maiden a likeness to her lost Mary.

"My name, indeed, is Mary," said the stranger, sobbing wild:
Will you be to me a mother? I am Mary Garvin's child.

She then tells how her mother, just before she died, bade her father take her to her kinsfolk far away. The Priest told the mother that this would be a wrong to her child. The dying woman's love for her father and mother was proof against the remonstrance of the Priest. When the story is told Farmer Garvin kneels by his hearthstone and asks them to pray with him. Rising from his knees, he sees the stranger "cross his forehead with the sign of Papistrie" The sign of Rome disturbs the heart of the old Protestant. Mary asks him not to chide her father, for in that faith her mother died

"Creed and rite perchance may differ, yet our faith and hope be one,

Remark on the power of natural affection to soften the severities of creed. Religion not the acceptance of a creed, though creed affects character—but being and doing good. Fine lives lived by men of all creeds—nevertheless a duty to know what and why we believe. All have personal friends whose theological beliefs are different from ours. George Macdonald's "David Elginbrod" says "there's something better than opinion in the heart of every God-fearing body." The something better is love of goodness, honour and justice.

SUNDAY, MAY 28TH.

ABRAHAM DAVENPORT (PAGE 255).

(Read Luke ii. 49; John ix. 4; Acts xxi. 1-14.)

"A witness to the ages as they pass
That simple duty hath no place for fear."

On a May-Day of the year 1780, the law-givers of Connecticut, in their legislative robes, were assembled in the old State House for business. Over the bloom and sweet life of Spring there fell a horror of great darkness. Birds ceased to sing, barn-yard fowls roosted, the sounds of labour died, men prayed, women wept, and there was a general fear that the Lord's Great Day had come. Some of the Statesmen advised that they should adjourn. All looked to Abraham Davenport, who was regarded as a man of exceeding wisdom and grace. He said that whether the Day of Judgment had come or not, he only knew his present duty, and his Lord's command to occupy till He come. For himself he was resolved to remain at his post, and do the work entrusted to him.

"I choose for one to meet him face to face—
No faithless servant frightened from my task,
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls;
And therefore, with all reverence, I would say,
Let God do his work, we will see to ours
Bring in the candles!" "And they brought them in."

The legislative work went on, and Abraham Davenport spoke well and wisely, while his colleagues listened.

"Between the pauses of his argument
To hear the thunder of the wrath of God
Break from the hollow trumpet of the cloud."

Remark on the strong sense of personal responsibility and public duty shown in the words and deeds of Abraham Davenport. He regarded his legislative work as a sacred calling. What is a call to work in any good cause? How do we come to feel that necessity is laid upon us? The call is in the possession of gifts and opportunities. Whittier himself was called in this way to take the noble part he did in the anti-slavery movement, Read his poem, "The Moral Warfare" (page 98). All who have greatly helped on the world's higher progress have heard and obeyed in some way the divine call to work. What can we do? Can we not try to "make the little world within our reach the better for our being in it, the gladder for our human speech?"

JOHN HARRISON.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Dr. Sparrow.

This, the first of May, May-day as we call it,—is a day of rejoicing in nearly all European countries, because it seems on May-day as if Spring had really come. How glad we all are to have done with winter, to say good-bye to snow and frost, and skates and great-coats, and to welcome the warm days, the green leaves and the apple-blossoms. Everything seems full of new life, and the new life of Spring brings the colour into our cheeks, with the sparkle into our eyes, and sets all the young things in the world dancing for very joy. The one thing about Spring which is more striking and impressive than any other is the new life which is everywhere bursting into leaf and flower, rushing through the trunks of all the great trees into every little branch and bud, giving birth to millions of insects, calling the bee into the sunshine, and making the birds sing for joy. Wherever we go, into the park, down the country lane, in the very ditches and ponds, in the air above, in the earth beneath, there is new life. Every pore of matter is bursting with life. Here are the young lambs; here are the soft, downy, little ducklings; and birds' nests everywhere, with their four or five eggs waiting to be hatched,—life, new life, poured into nature's cup and running over!

Do you know that every morning and evening there is a wonderful concert going on in praise of this new life? I woke up early this morning, just as it was beginning to get light: the sky was dull and grey overhead, but in the East was a faint flush of golden light which told of the coming sun. And in a minute or two there was a stir and a rustle. From the trees and bushes there came a chirping and twittering which went on for about five minutes, telling me that the birds in their nests were waking up, rubbing their eyes, clearing their throats, and having a little family talk before beginning the business of the day. Then came a curious thing. The chirping and twittering ceased, and it was almost quite silent as if the birds were all waiting and listening for something. So they were. They were waiting for the call to morning prayers! It was the Blackbird began it. He always does. In the silence the Blackbird sounded his bugle-note. "Attention!" said he to the birds great and small: "Let us give thanks." Then all the life in a thousand little hearts, and all the song in a thousand little throats began the concert and poured out such a full and happy hymn as almost deafened one to hear. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord," they seemed to say in every variety of key, and phrase and note. So it went on for a full quarter of an hour, and then the morning Cantata finished, away went the songsters to catch the early worm for a dainty breakfast!

Now, of all the birds that take part in this morning concert, none is so insignificant, none is of so little account as the Sparrow. The Blackbird and Thrush, the Robin, Lark, Linnet, and Chaffinch are all better songsters than he. He can hardly be said to sing at all. He can only chirp and chatter on one note, and is indeed, compared with others, a very indifferent musician. Then he is very small and dresses like a Quaker, all in drab, whereas other birds have fine shirt-fronts, and coats of various hues. Altogether he is the least important among all the birds of the air—the commonest and the cheapest; and yet, common and cheap as he is, not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Heavenly Father! Think of that.

Among the lovers of birds and watchers of their ways we must always place Jesus Christ. He delighted to watch them on the wing, or building their nests, or feeding their young. He noticed among other things how cheap and little thought of were the sparrows. In the East, where butchers' meat as we call it is scarce, they kill and eat the shoals of little birds which are found there. In the market place you may see scores of them on skewers. Now Jesus noticed that two sparrows were sold for a farthing only, but that if a customer bought two farthings' worth he got five for his money—one thrown in. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" "Are not five sparrows sold

for two farthings?" Now which of these sparrows was the one thrown into the bargain as if it counted for nothing? But Jesus said that not even the odd one thrown in was forgotten before God. Whichever of these sparrows was so lightly thought of by man as to be given away for nothing—not worth even the widow's mite—God thought of it, and valued it, and cared for it.

Do you know what the great Martin Luther once said of the sparrow? He called the sparrow his D.D.—his Doctor of Divinity, for, he said, the sparrow had taught him better lessons of trust in God than all the books on divinity he had ever read. In his big laughing way he called this common little fellow "The Rev. Sparrow Sparrow, D.D." For the sparrow seemed to say to Luther, "If God takes care of me who am so little, dusty and drab, with so little music in my voice, and so insignificant compared with the other birds, do you not think he will take care of you, Martin, when you go before kings and princes and confront a thousand dangers?" Yes, all day long the sparrow preaches his sermon of trust and hope, and makes it easier for troubled men to believe in God.

Then again, God has made the sparrow to be, as no other bird is, the friend of man. For the sparrow is not shy and afraid of man. He makes his nest under the eaves of our houses; he stays with us in winter when many other birds fly away, and is almost the only bird who cannot be driven out of our towns by smoke and dust and noise. You may find him not only in country lanes, but in the slums and courts of our great cities,—his brown coat turned almost black by the grimy atmosphere, but his little heart cheerful still, always saucy, always gay, always chattering, always hopeful You know he has sharp, cunning ways, and is a great eater, so the farmers sometimes have too much of him; but we in the towns never have too much of him. He brings us news of trees and flowers, and makes us think of pleasant green fields, and asks us out of his saucy eyes, and by his saucily wagging tail, whether we are not going to be kind to him and throw him a few crumbs?

In the roaring city,
Sparrows' voices lend,
Something of the country
To the hearts that spend
Season after season
There, and never hear
Blackbirds in the apple,
Blackbirds in the pear.

But if the sparrow teaches us a lesson of trust, and ministers to us happy thoughts, ought we not to be kind to him? Anyway, ought we not to be kind to what God loves and cares for? God loves the sparrows. It is He who feeds them. It is He gives them a new coat every year. And whatever God thinks of in kindness ought to ensure our kindness. Who was it threw a stone at the sparrow? Who was it robbed his nest? Mercy to birds and beasts is a part of religion. A very great and wise poet once said,—

He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast,
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small:
For the dear Lord that loveth us
He made and loveth all.

How dreadful to think that anybody should ill-use what God loves! St. Francis called the birds and animals his brothers and sisters, and he had such sympathy with them and was so kind to them that the most shy and timid of them would come to his hand and sit on his shoulder. We ought to guard and hallow anything that God has made: we ought specially to be kind to the sparrows since Jesus made them the text of one of his most beautiful lessons.

A sparrow with its plain brown coat,
The best it ever wore,
Has no sweet song or lovely note,—
A chirp, and nothing more.

Yet as it hops from bough to bough,
Or flies from tree to tree,
As if it cared not where or how,—
As restless as can be.

Or by a leaf well sheltered sleeps,
Its head beneath its wing:
God watches, cares for it, and keeps
The thoughtless little thing.

And if He keeps the sparrow so,
Why should I ever fear?
Life has its troubles, but I know
God's loving help is near.

JOSEPH WOOD.

Midland Church Calendar for May.

ATHERSTONE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, of Tamworth. Service at 3 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Church of the Messiah, Broad Street.
Ministers: Revs. Dr. Crosskey, 117, Gough Road; and James Crossley, 5, Wyndham Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. W. J. Clarke, 160, Pershore Road.
Services: 10-15, 2-45, and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. T. Pipe, 59, Gt. Brook Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister: Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, Claremont Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Old Meeting Church.
Minister: Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Choir Fund Collections on May 14th. Spohr's "God Thou Art Great" at Evening Service.

BIRMINGHAM: The Church of the Saviour.
Minister: The Rev. J. C. Street, 19, Charlotte Road, Edgbaston.
Services: 11 and 6-30.

BANBURY: Christ Church, Horsefair.
Minister: Rev. H. Hill. Service: Evening, 6-30.
Special: May 14th, "Aspects of Unbelief." May 28th, "Principle and Pleasure."

COSELEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry Eachus. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: May 14th, Choir Sermons.

CRADLEY: Netherend Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. E. O'Connor. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: Anniversary Service, May 14th, at 3-30, Preacher, Rev. J. Crossley.

DUDLEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Vacant. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

EVESHAM: Oak Street Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A., 9, Albert Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

Midland Church Calendar for May.—*(Continued.)*

KIDDERMINSTER :
Minister : Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. Services : 10-30 and 6-30.
Special : May 7th, Oddfellows' and Foresters' Annual Church Parade. Service at 3 p.m. May 14th, Sunday School Sermons, 10-30, 3, and 6-30; Preacher, Rev. E. D. P. Evans.

KINGSWOOD : Kingswood Chapel, Hollywood.
Minister : Rev. J. Hardinge Matthews. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special : Flower Service, May 14th.

OLDBURY : Unitarian Meeting House.
Minister : Rev. Henry McKean, The Dingle, Oldbury. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

SHREWSBURY : High Street Church.
Minister : Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S., Claremont Hill. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

STOURBRIDGE : Presbyterian Chapel.
Minister : Rev. A. W. Timmis. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

TAMWORTH : Cole Hill Chapel.
Minister : Rev. J. Howard, 17, Aldergate. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

THE LYE : Unitarian Chapel.
Minister : Rev. I. Wrigley, B.A. Service : 6-30.
Special : Whit Sunday : "Speaking with Tongues."

WALSALL : Unitarian Free Church.
Minister : Rev. Peter Dean, 3, Sandwell Street. Services : 11-15 and 6-30.
Special :

WEST BROMWICH : Lodge Road Chapel.
Minister : Rev. John Harrison, Jesson Street. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special : May 3rd : Girls' Guild Entertainment. May 14th : Musical Service, Schubert's "Song of Miriam" in the Evening.

WHITCHURCH : Church of the Saviour, Highgate.
Minister : Rev. George Eyre-Evans, 5, Mill Street.
Services : 11, 2-15 for Children, 6-30.
Special : Church open daily for private prayer and rest.

WOLVERHAMPTON : Unity Church, Snow Hill.
Minister : Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, Oaklands Road. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special : Sunday School Sermons and Collections, May 14th.

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